

PRESS COVERAGE



Taryn Simon: The Innocents

August 2 — October 1, 2005

1. Chicago Reader, 9. 2. 2005
2. Chicago Reader, 9. 16. 2005
3. Chicago Tribune, 8. 25. 2005
4. Time Out Chicago, 8. 4. 2005
5. Time Out Chicago, 8. 18. 2005
6. Time Out Chicago, 8. 25. 2005

MoCP

Museum of
Contemporary Photography

events+ exhibitions

August 2- October 2, 2005

Taryn Simon:
The Innocents

CLOSING RECEPTION

Thursday, September 29
5-7pm
Museum of Contemporary Photography

FILM SCREENING

Murder on a Sunday Morning (111 minutes)
Wednesday, September 14, 6pm
Museum of Contemporary Photography
600 S. Michigan Ave. 1st floor

**FILM SCREENING AND DISCUSSION
WITH DIRECTOR LAURI FELDMAN**

The Innocent (71 minutes)
Monday, September 26, 2005, 6pm
Room 921, 9th Floor, 600 S. Michigan Ave.

PANEL DISCUSSION

*Mistaken Identities:
Stories of the Wrongfully Convicted*
Thursday, September 22, 2005, 6pm
Museum of Contemporary Photography
600 S. Michigan Ave. 1st floor

August 2- October 2, 2005

Erik Johnson:
Borderlands

**CLOSING RECEPTION
AND BOOK SIGNING**

Thursday, September 29, 5-7pm
Museum of Contemporary Photography

LECTURE:

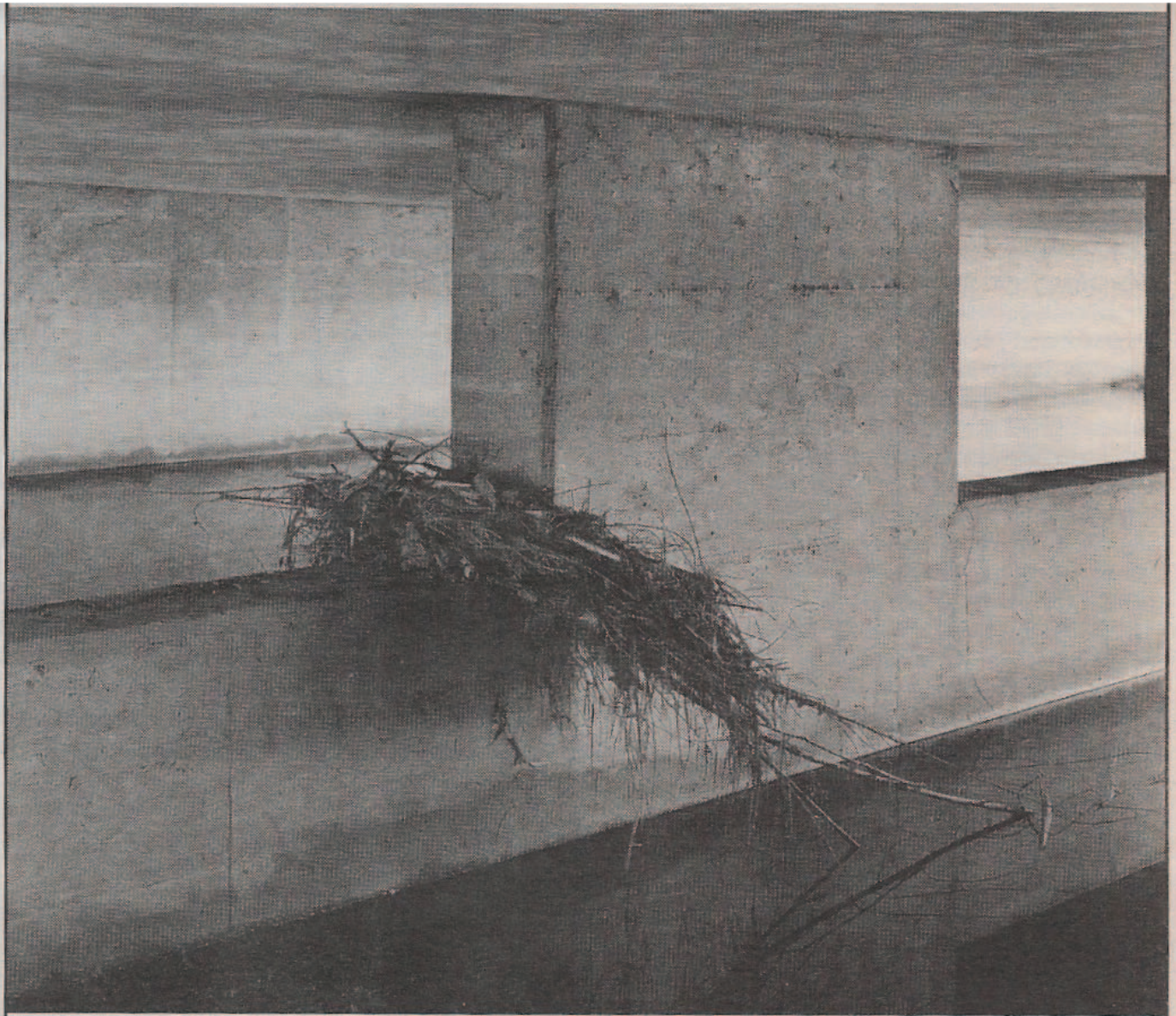
JOEL-PETER WITKIN
Thursday, September 8, 2005, 6pm
1104 S. Wabash, 8th Floor

MEMBERS EVENT

Photographic Excursion
Saturday, September 24, 1-4pm
reservation required

ABOVE: TARYN SIMON
Charles Irvin Fain
Scene of the crime, the Snake River, Melba, Idaho
Served 18 years of a death sentence
c-print
46 x 59 inches
Courtesy of Gagolian Gallery

BELOW: ERIK JOHNSON
Untitled (underpass), 2002
c-print
30 x 39 inches
Courtesy of the artist



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Galleries

Taryn Simon's exhibit of large-format photographs has its roots in an assignment from the *New York Times Magazine* in 2000. The magazine asked her to photograph a handful of wrongfully convicted men who'd been on death row. Simon found that while some were angry and others were forgiving, all had been devastated. "They would tell me about the process by which they were convicted," she says, "and it often involved a victim responding to a photograph presented by law enforcement, and then having to deal with her personal memory of the experience." The process was frequently flawed—sometimes the police would show the victim two sets of photos in which one picture repeated.

The daughter of an amateur photographer, Simon says she grew up with lots of weekend slide shows: "My parents relate to the past through photographs, and I've always been interested in the way photographs replace memories." After the assignment was done, she began researching wrongful convictions and the role photography plays in the legal system. Reminded of the importance of context in photography, she included captions with this set of portraits. Her book, *The Innocents*, includes even more explanatory text.

Funded by a Guggenheim grant and the Innocence Project in New York, with assistance from organizations like the Center on Wrongful Convictions at Northwestern University Law School, Simon crisscrossed the country for six months, photographing about 50 subjects. While a few

Taryn Simon:
The Innocents
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former inmates didn't want to be involved, most were eager. Simon knew before she talked to them that even honestly solicited eyewitness testimony could be wrong, but she was surprised at how often the process was corrupt. One of her subjects, Troy Webb, was sentenced to 47 years (he served 7)

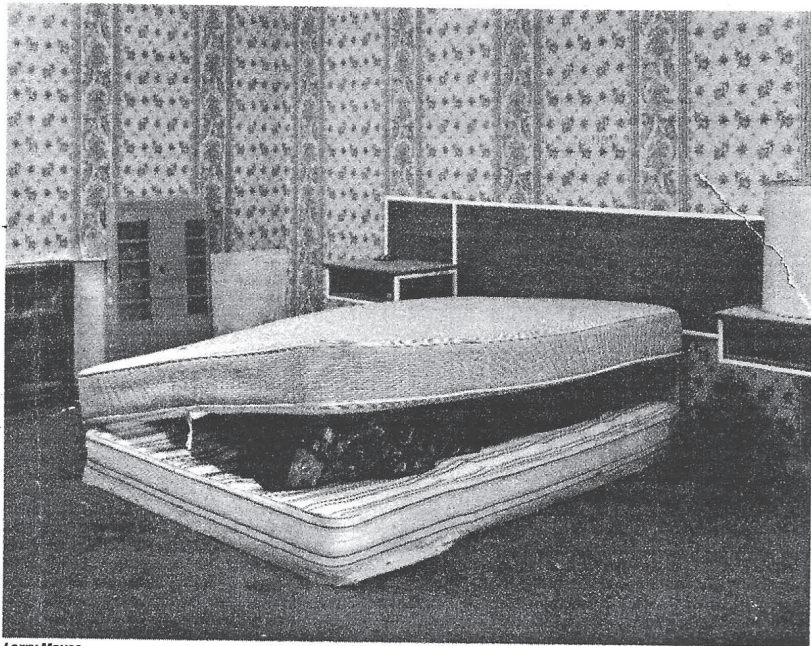
because the victim told the investigators, "It looks like him, but he's a little too old." So the police showed her a picture taken four years before the crime."

Simon says that the first few photos she took didn't represent the power of the stories she was hearing, so she changed the locales. "I went back and rephotographed at sites that had particular significance. The most powerful place to photograph was the scene of the crime—most of the time they've read about it but have never been there. If you're innocent, you don't want to have any familiarity with that place before your trial." Other sites are somehow related to the case: Simon photographed Calvin Washington, who did 13 years, through the window of a motel room, the place where a witness claimed Washington had confessed. But others didn't want to visit the crime scene even though their innocence had been proved, fearing the visit could be used against them.

While attending Brown University, Simon took classes at the Rhode Island School of Design and discovered large-format photography. "I liked the complexity of it combined with the beauty. The resolution is amazing." For magazine assignments, she shot her subjects—Chechen fighters and members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, normally shown in fleeting moments—with a four-by-five camera, carefully lighting and composing her portraits. In this series, too, she tried to honor the serious subject matter. "These are people who have only been presented photographically in very degraded terms, in old photos poorly reproduced or through their mug shots." When "The Innocents" opened in New York in 2003, the Life After Exoneration Project flew her subjects in. Most still live in fear or are haunted by their convictions. Some lost their families while they were in prison,



Calvin Washington
C&E Motel, Room No. 24, Waco, Texas
Where an informant claimed to have heard Washington confess
Served 13 years of a life sentence for capital murder



Larry Mayes
Scene of arrest, The Royal Inn, Gary, Indiana
Police found Mayes hiding beneath a mattress in this room
Served 18.5 years of an 80-year sentence for Rape, Robbery and Unlawful Deviate Conduct

many are unemployed, and others are working at jobs far below their capabilities. "When you go for a job interview, you have to say you've been in prison,"

Simon says, "so they're going with newspaper clippings to show their innocence." After the book came out, they had additional proof. —Fred Camper

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

ART

Photos of exonerated memorable

By Alan G. Artner
Tribune art critic

Taryn Simon spent 2001 photographing people who had been accused, convicted and incarcerated for crimes they did not commit. The irony of this was not lost on her, for often the people had been misidentified from photographs, and to say something about the injustice, there she was photographing them again.

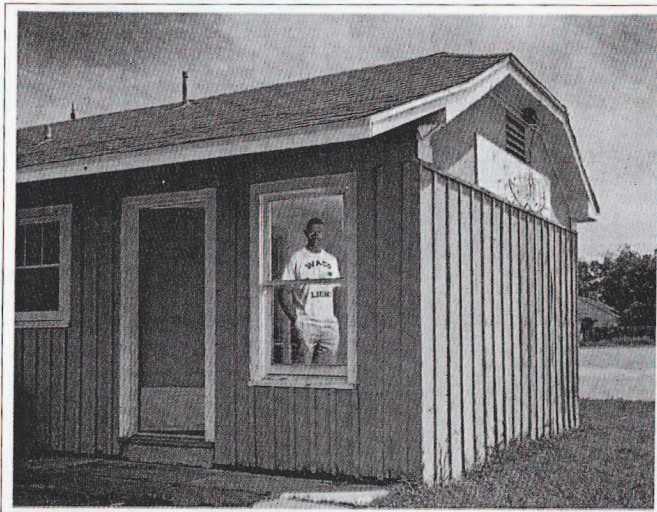
The results were collected in a book, "The Innocents" (Umbrage, 2003), and an exhibition, which has come to the Museum of Contemporary Photography. Both prove difficult to forget.

Simon shot each of her exonerated subjects at a site central to their cases. In most instances, this meant the scene of the crime, though some photos were taken at the scene of the misidentification or alibi. Once there, she posed them and photographed in color. The exhibition prints are large and accompanied by labels giving the subject's name, time served, length of sentence and crime(s) for which they were convicted.

Apart from a palette that emphasizes golds and browns, Simon's picture-making vision does not stand out. The poses of her subjects are ordinary. Her images convey next to nothing about the subjects' character or psychology.

The strength of the work comes from us seeing people in landscapes and interiors the labels tell us had life-altering effect. We scarcely can imagine why they would want to re-engage so directly a part of the past that brought them ruin. But the fact that all of them did suggests the wrong may have been the largest thing they've had in life, and what we imagine they feel about it overwhelms us regardless of how much feeling the pictures actually show.

Simon's book complemented the photographs with brief interviews of her subjects. In the exhibition, they speak on video, adding tones of



defeat too terrible to be borne.

A second exhibition, of color landscape photographs by Eirik Johnson, offers a kind of palliative. Johnson is interested in what happens at sites that are between places of habitation and desolation. In his travels he found that things accrue, and he makes often unexpectedly

beautiful photographs showing them.

Some of his pictures are of secluded wooded areas through which few people pass. Others are of the margins of suburban housing developments where large numbers of people live. In both are objects the hand of man has left behind. Usually the objects are pieces of junk a trav-



Above: "Untitled (Tires)" from 2003 is part of "Eirik Johnson: Borderlands."

Left: Taryn Simon's "Calvin Washington C&E Motel, Room No. 24, Waco, Texas" (2002). The photo caption says:

"Where an informant claimed to have heard Washington confess
"Served 13 years of a Life sentence for Murder"

eler has dropped or the wind has blown in. But sometimes Johnson has come upon collections that clearly have been formed and crude habitations that have been built only to have been abandoned. These are, of course, disfigurements on the land, though the photographer does not present them that way. He celebrates them, as if they were prized finds on an expedition.

Thus at the core of each show are accidents, grim or serendipitous.

"Taryn Simon: The Innocents" and "Eirik Johnson: Borderlands" will continue at the Museum of Contemporary Photography, 600 S. Michigan Ave., through Oct. 1. 312-663-5554.
aartner@tribune.com

ARCHITECTURE NOTES

mfacnchicago.org). El: Blue to 18th. Bus: 9 Ashland (24 hrs), 50 Damen. Tue-Sun 10am-5pm. **Chicano Visions: American Painters on the Verge.** Actor Cheech Marin organized this traveling exhibition that displays works by 26 artists from the Chicano School of Painting art movement. Through Sept 4.

Millennium Park

Boeing Galleries, Michigan Ave between Randolph and Monroe Sts (312-742-116, www.millenniumpark.org). El: Red, Blue to Washington; Orange, Green, Brown, Purple (rush hrs) to Randolph. Bus: 3, 6, 26, 145, 147, 151 (24 hrs). Daily 6am-11pm. **Revealing Chicago: An Aerial Portrait.** Large-scale photographs by Terry Evans taken from helicopters, hot air balloons and small planes. Through Oct 10.

Milwaukee Art Museum

700 N Art Museum Dr, Milwaukee (414-224-3200, www.mam.org). Daily 10am-5pm; Thur 10am-8pm. \$4-\$12. **CUT/Film as Found Object.** This exhibition features the work of eight video artists, including Christian Marclay, Douglas Gordon, and Jennifer and Kevin McCoy. It's a greatest hits collection of video art by artists who work with the same material—found footage—in intriguingly different ways. Through Sept 11.

The Arts & Crafts Movement in Europe and America, 1880-1920: Design for the Modern World. This traveling exhibition organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art features furniture and decorative objects made by international designers and utopian art colonies. Through Sept 11.

Museum of Contemporary Art

220 E Chicago Ave at Mies van der Rohe Way (312-280-2660, www.mcachicago.org). El: Red to Chicago. Bus: 66 Chicago (24 hrs), 151 Sheridan (24 hrs). Tue

10am-8pm; Wed-Sun 10am-5pm. \$6. **Dan Flavin: A Retrospective.** More than 50 pieces are on display by this minimalist artist who worked solely with light. This may well be the only meditative space filled with fluorescent light you'll ever encounter. Through Oct 30. **Circle of Influence: Letters by Dan Flavin and Artists' Books by his Peers.** This collection of writings by Flavin's peers from the MCA archives includes work by Robert Smithson, Sol LeWitt, James Turrell and others. Through Oct 9. **Aernout Mik: Refraction.** Dutch video installation artist Aernout Mik stages fictional scenes rooted in reality by combining filmmaking and sculptures to create surreal scenarios. Mik's video "Refraction" depicts the moments after a traffic accident. Through Sept 25. **12X12: New Artists/ New Work.** Deb Sokolow's detailed drawings are often comical observations on the connections between various people and places in her apartment complex, neighborhood and office. Through Aug 28.

Museum of Contemporary Photography

Columbia College, 600 S Michigan Ave at Harrison St (312-344-7779). El: Red to Harrison. Bus: 1, 3, X3, 4 (24 hrs), X4, 6, 7, 10, 14, 26, 28, 126, 127, 145, 146, 147. Mon-Wed, Fri 10am-5pm, Thu 10am-8pm, Sat noon-5pm. **Taryn Simon: The Innocents.** Working for *The New York Times Magazine* in 2000, Simon photographed people freed from death row on the account of a wrongful conviction. Her interest in the use of photography as a tool that led to misidentification is in play here: These images are of innocent people at the scene of their arrests or alleged crimes. Through Oct 1. **Eirik Johnson: Borderlands.** Photographs of rivers and streams lined with debris or faint pathways marks the no-man's land between new residential areas and the wild. Through Oct 1.



Flaws in the system Taryn Simon, Ronald Jones. Scene of arrest, South Side, Chicago, Illinois. Served eight years of a Death sentence for Murder and Rape, 2002. From "The Innocents." Simon's images of the 44 men and one woman who were wrongfully convicted and later released through DNA evidence is on exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Photography through Oct 1. See *Museums & Institutions*.

Navy Pier

Navy Pier, 600 Grand Ave (www.pierwalk.com). Bus: 29, 65, 66 (24 hrs), 124. Sun-Thu 10am-10pm; Fri, Sat 10am-12am. **New Yorker art critic Peter Schjeldahl is back.** For the second time he's curating "Navy Pier Walk," an annual contemporary sculpture exhibition. This year's artists are Jim Benedict, Coral Lambert, Zoran Mojsilov, Ralph Provisero, Tamsie Ringler, Kay Rosen, Ulrich Ruckriem and Franz West. Through Oct 31.

Racine Art Museum

441 Main St, Racine, WI (262-638-8300, www.ramart.org). Tue-Sat 10am-5pm, Sun noon-5pm. **Glitz!!!! Luster and Luxe in RAM's Collection.** Features ceramic, fiber, glass, metal, wood and works on paper from RAM's permanent collection that demonstrate luxury and use of precious materials. Through Sept 11.

Smart Museum of Art

University of Chicago, 5550 S Greenwood Ave at 55th St (773-702-0200, smartmuseum.uchicago.edu). Bus: 4 Cottage Grove (24 hrs). Tue, Wed, Fri 10am-4pm; Thu 10am-8pm; Sat-Sun 11am-5pm. **Centers and Edges: Modern Ceramic Design and Sculpture, 1880-1980.** Covering 100 years of American and European pottery, this exhibition investigates the ways clay has been used, from utilitarian Scandinavian designs to Ruth Duckworth's contemporary artworks. Through Sept 18. **Quiet Revolutions: Modernizing Traditional Art in East Asia.** The political transformations of the 20th century in East Asia reshaped artistic conventions that had been in place for hundreds, and sometimes even thousands, of years. This exhibition portrays the tensions between time-honored traditions and modernity. Through Nov 6.

Galleries

River North

El: Brown, Purple (rush hrs) to Chicago. Bus: 29, 66 (24 hrs), 156.

Architech

730 N Franklin St between Ontario and Erie Sts (312-475-1290, www.architechgallery.com). Thu-Sat noon-5pm. "Designed for Living: The Modern Interior." Renderings of chairs, carpets,

lamps and radios by Modern architects and designers, including G.M. Niedeecken and Henry P. Glass expands our notions of modern design. Through Aug 27.

Andrew Bao Gallery

300 W Superior St at Franklin St (312-335-8601, www.andrewbaogallery.com). Tue-Sat 10am-6pm. **Jungjin Lee: Beyond Photography.** For this exhibit, sheets of rice paper have been hand coated with photo emulsion and printed with large color negatives of common Korean objects. Through Aug 13.

Russell Bowman Art Advisory

311 W Superior St, suite 115, at Orleans St (312-751-9500, www.bowmanart.com). Fri-Sat 10am-5:30pm. **Summer Group Show.** Work by Jim Hodges, Robert Mapplethorpe, Takashi Murakami, Tim Rollins & K.O.S., James Surls and William T. Wiley as well as the estate of Roger Brown and the quilts of Gee's Bend. Through Sept 3.

Roy Boyd Gallery

739 N Wells St at Superior St (312-642-1606, www.royboydgallery.com). Tue-Sat 10am-5:30pm. "Inhabitants of a Small Planet: paintings by Richard Gibbons." Through Aug 27.

Carl Hammer Gallery

740 N Wells St at Superior St (312-266-8512, www.hammergallery.com). Tue-Fri 11am-6pm; Sat 11am-5pm. "The Human Footprint: A Visual Survey of Human Influence on the Physical Worlds." This group show features work by more than a dozen artists including Don Baum, Orly Corgan, Henry Darger and Hollis Sigler. Through Aug 31.

Ann Nathan Gallery

212 W Superior St between Franklin and Wells Sts (312-664-6622, www.annnathangallery.com). Tue-Fri 10am-5:30pm; Sat 11am-5pm. As part of VISION10, organized by the Chicago Art Dealers Association, the gallery is presenting "English Idyll," oil and enamel on paper by Tim Crowder and Bob Burdette's "Stories." Burdette's graphic paintings of fairy tale imagery mixed with advertising pack a punch with a smile (see Review). Through Aug 31.

Printworks

311 W Superior St, Suite 105, between Franklin and Orleans Sts (312-664-9407, www.printworkschicago.com). Tue-Fri 10am-5pm; Sat 11am-5pm. "A Feast of the Senses: New Drawings by Paula Campbell, Bill Frederick and Elizabeth Ockwell." Through Aug 20.

Judy Saslow Gallery

300 W Superior St at Franklin St

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ART & DESIGN

ART & DESIGN

The age of 'Innocents'

Two jarringly beautiful exhibits at the MCP explore truth in imagery **By Ruth Lopez**



Taryn Simon, Jeffrey Pierce; Lake Huron, Port Huron, Michigan; served 15 years of a 65-year sentence for rape and robbery, 2002.

Photographer Taryn Simon's "The Innocents," at the Museum of Contemporary Photography, should piss you off. These large color portraits of 22 people released from death row after being cleared by DNA testing began as an assignment for *The New York Times Magazine* in 2000. Simon traveled around the country documenting the men and one woman who had been wrongfully imprisoned, and managed to persuade many of them to pose in the spots where they had been plucked without warning and dropped into as many as 18 years in hell.

That project prompted Simon to investigate the criminal justice system's flawed use of photography. A quote by a crime victim, printed in the exhibit's brochure, eloquently explains how her participation in identifying her attacker through photos and creating the composite drawing led to a false arrest: "I picked out Ronald because, subconsciously, in my mind, he resembled the photo, which resembled the composite,

which resembled the attacker. All the images became enmeshed in one image...."

These poignant photographs can be admired for aesthetic reasons, but they can't be divorced from their contexts and so, in this way, "The Innocents" becomes political art. As images, they present strong arguments for reform. The subjects of these environmental portraits, shot in ordinary places where their otherwise ordi-

This is photojournalism touched by a fine artist's sensibility of composition, color and light.

nary lives were disrupted, are living testaments to a failed system.

We see Frederick Daye posing with a bottle of beer in the American Legion Post where he was arrested. It's hard to imagine what it must have been like for Daye, who served ten years in prison, and the others to return to these locations. This is photojournalism touched by a fine artist's

sensibility of composition, color and light. In the bird's-eye view of Tim Durham (who served three and a half years), taken in an Oklahoma skeet shooting field, Durham appears to be floating with his rifle above the hundreds of busted clay disks that at first glance look like a huge patch of red flowers. There is an education room with a video of interviews of the subjects; newspaper clippings, including the excellent *Chicago Tribune* series on the death penalty; and books, including a catalog of Simon's complete project. In that book there is an image of James O'Donnell, who is shown holding a police sketch of the perpetrator, who might look more like some of us reading this than it does him.

Simon has stipulated that the captions for each photograph run in full when they are reproduced, and so, in image after image, the number of years lost begins to jump out. It's a monstrous thievery and begs the question: If our criminal justice system can get it so wrong, what business does it have enacting something like the Patriot Act?

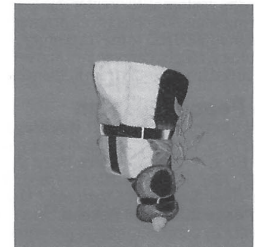
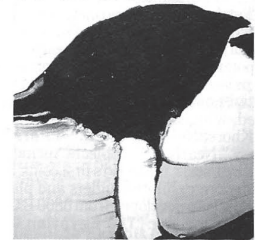
For visual disturbances of another kind, the museum also presents the work of Eirik Johnson in "Borderlands," a collection of jarringly beautiful, untitled landscape photographs of trashed environments.

Because of their formal elegance, these appear to be soothing images. But upon closer examination, it becomes apparent that they're not shots of Eden. The seemingly calm stream under a canopy of tree branches in one image reveals itself to be a long scrap of a discarded carpet. Johnson is fond of the places where worn tires accumulate and underground spaces

where water collects. Like "The Innocents," this is an exhibition of bleak environments, but an important one to experience firsthand.

"The Innocents" and "Borderlands" are at the Museum of Contemporary Photography and run through October 1. See Museums and Institutions.

Reviews



From left, Rita Rubas, *The Earth Moved*, 2005; Aaron Steffes, *Untitled*, 2005.

"Dual Vision" Wendy Cooper Gallery, through Sat 20 (see West Loop).

Anything is fodder for painting these days, and in this exhibition, six young artists make that a good thing. Curator John McKinnon matched each painter with another so their work is hung in pairs throughout the show—hence the title "Dual Vision." In each of these couples, the painters' wild, irreverent styles take everything as subject matter—from historical art genres to heel balm and yarn—making for duos so awkward, they visually resonate like nails on the chalkboard.

Within these jarring juxtapositions the painting is sumptuous and the awkwardness compelling, starting with Rita Rubas and Aaron Steffes. Rubas's swipes of paint glaze the canvas in a shocking array of macabre colors and gunky textures. They are gruesome, resembling dead animals punctured by bright flecks that look like festering eyes. Or, possibly, Rubas's abstractions resemble gory scenes because they are paired with Steffes's still lifes: surrealist-inspired meetings of muzzles, horse heads, ointment and spider webs casually placed on the canvas like Cézanne's bowls of fruit.

Dipping into the digital domain, paintings by Josh Podoll and William Staples are strewn with hard angles and CAD-like hexagons. While Staples's muddled geometric tableaux appear to be horror scenarios and apocalyptic explosions, next to Podoll's work they are scenes and characters from computer games. Still, these paintings do what any good work of art does—they don't let you look away. —Madeline Nusser

ART & DESIGN

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Charles Irvin Fain
Scene of the crime, the Snake River, Melba, Idaho
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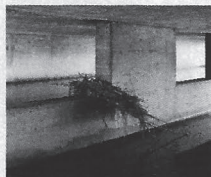
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EIRIK JOHNSON
Untitled (underpass), 2002
c-print
30 x 39 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Wednesday, September 7, 7-9 pm

Sigur Ros: Takk... Listening Event

MoCP debuts the new Sigur Ros
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